



Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: March 10, 2021.

Time: 7:00 PM – 10:00 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes.

1. Administration.

Members in Attendance: Dan Amstutz, Michael Barry, Bill Copithorne, Lenard Diggins, Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis, Howard Muise (Chair), Tycho Nightingale, Scott Smith, Laura Swan, and Shoji Takahashi.

Members Absent: Ray Jones and Corey Rateau.

Members of Public in Attendance: Marcy Beck, Judy Crocker, Jacob Deck, Chris DiMeo, Thad Dingman, Linda Epstein, Jo Anne Preston, Judith Proctor, Paul Schlichtman, Petru Sofio, Joe Solomon, and Tracy Van Dorpe.

The Chair read the script for remotely conducted meetings, referred the members to the agenda attachment entitled "Governor Charles Baker's 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law," announced that the meeting was being recorded and reviewed the meeting ground rules.

The Minutes of the February 11, 2020, meeting were approved on a roll-call vote.

Correspondence Sent/Received from 02/04/21 to 03/04/21:

- Letter dated February 13, 2021, from Brian Hasbrouck to TAC regarding Mystic River to Minuteman Bikeway Summary presented at the February 10, 2021 TAC meeting.

2. Public Comments.

Petru Sofio: informed TAC that the left-turn traffic signal at eastbound Mass Ave and Medford Street does not turn yellow. He also requested that a yellow flashing phase be added. Bill Copithorne will follow up.

3. Town Issues/Activities.

A. Bill Copithorne provided an update from the Department of Public Works (DPW):

Mystic Street Bridge replacement plan: The consultant has not submitted the plan to MassDOT. It is undergoing quality-control review. DPW is aiming to start construction this year.

Lake Street/Minuteman Bikeway intersection: Punch list was provided to Dagle Electric Company, which will continue working through the month to complete the items. Signal timing is a priority; minor landscape and signage to-be completed. Bill Copithorne said louvers would be added between signals in response to a question from Petru Sofio. No-turn signs with "Except Bicycles" plaque to-be installed at the intersection have been delayed because the DPW has been moving its operations to accommodate the DPW facility reconstruction. The sign shop now is set up in its new location and is expected to have this completed. Dan Amstutz said that he would check on whether benches to be installed near the intersection had been ordered or received.

Howard Muise asked if DPW has received public feedback or comments on the Lake Street/Minutemen Bikeway intersection. Bill Copithorne responded that public feedback is not as much as DPW anticipated. He hypothesized that it might be due to less traffic and the winter season.

Road planning: Continuing planning with no specifics to report. DPW will spend \$1M on traditional pavement work; \$500K on maintenance work; and \$700K on curbs, sidewalks, and ramps. National Grid is updating information to DPW regarding its planned gas infrastructure upgrades. Summer Street between Grove and Mill Streets will be redone this summer. In response to questions from Len Diggins, Bill Copithorne responded that Feeney Bros. is the contractor for National Grid. Frequent gas leaks might be addressed, but leak repairs are prioritized by "imminent danger" to the public. The National Grid plan to update gas infrastructure extends for another 15 years, and it impacts DPW road work.

Howard Muise asked how the Federal stimulus will help with DPW work. Bill Copithorne responded that he has no information at this time; extra funding might lead to employee hiring.

Jacob Deck asked if DPW noticed any changes in roadway wear patterns since the pandemic. Bill Copithorne responded that he has no specifics.

B. Dan Amstutz provided an update from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).

Revision to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD): Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has extended the comment period to the proposed revisions to the MUTCD to May 14. Comments are encouraged by pedestrian and bicycle advocacy groups as the proposed MUTCD is viewed as “auto centric”. Scott Smith asked if the Town will be commenting on MUTCD, and Dan Amstutz responded that he will talk to Town officials about this as well as neighboring municipalities. He mentioned that the number of comments is important. Jeff Maxtutis commented that he will keep track of professional societies comments, which often include summaries and recommendations.

Bluebikes: stations will be returning to Arlington in the next 2 – 3 weeks.

MBTA: Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) “Forging Ahead” plan is moving forward with service cuts to buses scheduled to begin on March 14. Route 67 hours will be shortened; Route 77 will see reduced frequency; Route 79 will be suspended for an indefinite period.

Mailers have been sent to abutters on Pleasant Street informing them of MBTA bus-stop relocation work. MBTA will look into the possibility of allowing parking at bus stops on the weekend when Route 67 is not operating.

C. There was no update from the Police Department (APD).

4. Park Ave at Appleton St Warrant Article

Joe Solomon of Appleton Street updated the TAC on funding for a study on how a proposed signal at Park Ave and Appleton Street would affect traffic on Park Ave. Previously, he had submitted a Warrant Article that reads:

The purpose of this article is to see if the town will vote approximately \$5k to undertake a study of the need for an additional traffic light at the intersection of park Avenue and Appleton St or take any action related thereto.

On Monday, he and Howard Muise discussed it with the Town Finance Committee, which responded that it would investigate funding the study if the TAC endorsed it.

Bill Copithorne corrected and clarified to the TAC how DPW allocates funding for these traffic studies. There are separate budgets for maintenance and consulting. Every 2 or 3 years, a consulting budget is

allocated for these traffic studies, such as has been done for Mass Ave and Appleton Street.

Howard Muise inquired whether TAC should endorse the study before Connect Arlington is finalized. Dan Amstutz responded that the Connect Arlington draft map of safety improvement areas includes Park Ave and Appleton Street, and it is recognized by APD as a high-crash location. TAC has analyzed the intersection and has momentum to move forward. Dan Amstutz concluded that there is no reason to hold this priority location traffic signal study until after Connect Arlington is finalized.

Regarding the process in obtaining funding, Len Diggins cautioned about public input setting transportation priorities for Town Meeting. He expressed concern that the process can be influenced by persons and groups who know how to exert pressure on the Town, and it is for this reason that Len Diggins hesitates to support this endorsement. The Select Board needs to find money for these requests, and it is not for Town Meeting to decide.

Jeff Maxtutis emphasized that the money from the Warrant Article is for a feasibility study, which is the final piece of due diligence before TAC can make a recommendation to the Select Board. This is not for design and construction. Bill Copithorne concurred, adding that design and construction only happens when a large capital plan is put into place. Planned request is 2 – 3 years before the budget is allocated. Design and construction funding are not from the DPW budget.

Joe Solomon responded that the dangers of the Park Ave and Appleton Street intersection have been known for decades. His intent for submitting the Warrant Article was not to prioritize the project, but to move it forward to enable TAC to make a recommendation.

Petru Sofio added that Appleton is used by drivers as a cut-through to Route 2. He inquired whether a corridor plan including Park Ave, Mass Ave, and Appleton would help. Howard Muise responded that Wayne Chouinard is in favor of corridor study.

Howard Muise responded that the TAC's analysis of the intersection was initiated by a Select Board request. With this study, TAC would be in a position to make a recommendation to the Select Board. Scott Smith added that TAC serves to advise the Select Board, and TAC should endorse safety measures for this intersection. The dangers of this intersection are recognized, and TAC needs to address them. Jacob Deck concurred with the sentiment to move forward.

Shoji Takahashi asked whether the \$5,000 requested in the Warrant Article is enough to complete the feasibility study and added that he did not want to go back to the Finance Committee to request additional funding to complete this study. Jeff Maxtutis responded that \$5,000

would be adequate for a limited-scope traffic analysis to address TAC's needs before making a recommendation to the Select Board.

Tracy Van Dorpe of Appleton Street expressed her impatience to move forward. Noting a serious, high-speed crash at 9 am on January 2, and crashes every other month, she says that it is imperative that the Select Board understands the seriousness of the problem. She has two, 10-year-old children who do not feel safe crossing the intersection. She lends her support to Joe Solomon's Warrant Article.

Laura Swan put forth a motion to support the procurement of funds for a preliminary analysis of the traffic on Park Ave and the feasibility of a new traffic light at Park Ave and Appleton St. For clarity, the motion would go to the Town Finance Committee with a copy to the Select Board. Scott Smith seconded the motion.

The motion carried with unanimous support of TAC voting members.

5. New Work: SRTS Dallin Elementary School

Dan Amstutz introduced Judy Crocker, MassDOT outreach coordinator for the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. The SRTS report and tonight's presentation is available on the TAC calendar.

Dallin Principal Thad Dingman requested SRTS develop an arrival and dismissal plan. During the past several years, he has observed dangerous driving including: speeding towards Route 2, illegal turns, illegal parking, including encroachment on crosswalks, and excessive automobile idling. With the increase in Arlington's population, there is and will be more commuting to the school thereby exacerbating the problems.

Dallin actively communicates on arrival/dismissal procedures and has employed the SRTS curriculum. Dallin receives help from parent volunteers and APD. Family surveys have shown that arrival, in particular, continues to-be a safety concern. Thad Dingman would like to establish safer habits in the coming fall. The start of the school year is an opportunity to train new, safer habits.

Judy Crocker noted that Arlington Public Schools was one of first districts to join SRTS, a K – 8 program with funding through the Federal Government. SRTS encourages walking to school and employing engineering best practices for safety and sustainability. The Arrival and Dismissal Plan requested by Principal Dingman is one of several programs offered by SRTS.

Judy Crocker spent a temperate day in November, 2020, at Dallin Elementary School (under COVID hybrid-learning scenario) to observe arrival and dismissal. She discussed her general observations of the

nearby streets and signage; and then moved on to her observations of arrival and dismissal, including mode counts. She then presented general recommendations and school-specific recommendations.

In the SRTS draft Arrival and Dismissal Plan, the goal is “To implement a sustainable approach towards improving student safety by clearly separating student transportation modes on local municipal roadways”. Four points:

1. Florence Street: consider restricting street use directly in front of school (between George Street and Renfrew Street) during school arrival and dismissal times using the following strategies:
 - “DO NOT ENTER EXCEPT BUSES with hours”
 - Use, setup, and storage of portable flexposts, barrels, or construction horses with signage to block through access.
 - Delineate the legal parking spots opposite the school by painting them.
2. Consider adding a crossing guard to the Florence at Renfrew Street intersection.
3. George Street: make the street one-way from Florence to Rhinecliff Street.
4. George Street: consider installing handicapped parking.

Florence Ave in front of the school (between George and Renfrew Streets) is proposed as a school road closure with bus only access proposed for 7:55 – 8:10 am (as most students arrive between 8:00 – 8:10 am). Automobile drop-off location will be on Florence Ave in front of the playground (between Renfrew St and Wachusett Ave).

Tracy Van Doren of the Dallin School Council concurred with Thad Dingman’s comments, notably the dangerous vehicle movements. She added that the 6th-grade bus to Gibbs School has a morning pickup at Dallin, which occurs at the same time as Dallin arrival. She underscored that the start of the new school year is a time to develop a new culture around safe habits.

Jeff Maxtutis asked about kindergarten drop off at George Street and the set up and take down of signs on Florence Street in front of the school, if the proposal moved forward. Thad Dingman responded that Dallin discourages K drop off at George Street as K enrollment is much higher now than in the past. Traffic congestion on George Street in the morning is very high with staff parking. He continued that the set up and take down of signs will be performed by school and custodial staff, and PTO volunteers.

Howard Muise and Jeff Maxtutis wondered about unintended consequences of the SRTS plan, such as families conducting automobile drop offs on Renfrew Street instead of Florence Ave, and the impact on traffic flow throughout the neighborhood. TAC will establish a Working Group to look at Dallin arrival and dismissal in conjunction with SRTS and the community. If this is to move forward, the transportation pieces of the implementation of the Dallin-SRTS arrival and dismissal plan that affect the public streets would go to the Select Board for approval. APD and AFD also would need to approve of the plan.

Dan Amstutz offered to connect with APD and AFD regarding possible changes to the fire lane on George Street. He added that materials such as cones might be available from the Town.

Paul Schlichtman urged TAC to discuss the arrival and dismissal plan with the School Committee to make sure that the public hears about it in the context of the School Committee. There will be a significant impact on Dallin parents. Paul Schlichtman will make an introduction to the Community Relations Chair of School Committee.

The Working Group will comprise Dan Amstutz, Bill Copithorne, Jeff Maxtutis, and Laura Swan.

6. New Work: 1165R Mass Ave

Howard Muise presented a summary of the TAC Executive Committee's comments on the Traffic Impact Report (TIR) for a new apartment complex to-be sited at the Mirak Innovation Park. BETA Group conducted a peer review for the Town, and TAC's comments endorse or expand on BETA's comments. Due to the tight deadline, the TAC Executive Committee has not had the time to submit the report to the full TAC for discussion and approval. This Memo will be going to the Zoning Board of Appeals as from the TAC Executive Committee.

Howard Muise described a few high points from the Memo: He noted that the Town has a default speed of 25 mph where there is no posted speed. Public transportation, in particular MTBA buses are present in the area, however, there will be service reductions under the MBTA Forging Ahead program. It is not clear what services will be restored, if any.

The TIR should clarify the capacity and location of bike storage areas. The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program should consider subsidized MBTA passes and unbundling lease and parking cost to provide a reduced incentive to automobile ownership.

The Proponent should provide a continuous accessible sidewalk along the west driveway. The TIR noted a high crash rate for the intersection of Forest St/Ryder St/Peirce St (almost three times the averages for the State and District). BETA requested a confirmation on the crash rate.

The Executive Committee commented that APD crash data for this intersection also should be checked . If the crash rate is high, the Proponent should fund a road safety audit for the intersection.

Petru Sofio commented on his personal experience of the danger of the intersection of Forest St/Ryder St/Peirce St. Scott Smith agreed on the danger of the intersection. Separately, he added that the American Community Survey provides mode choice data, which sets the mode as the one used for the longest distance. He will email language to Howard Muise regarding the limitation of ACS data to-be added to the Memo.

Jeff Maxtutis commented on landscaping as the present condition is industrial, and not particularly friendly to pedestrians. Howard Muise responded that a plan was recently submitted for landscaping.

Dan Amstutz commented on the low-quality access to the Minuteman Bikeway from Ryder Street. Ryder Street is a private way, which brings challenges to improving the roadway. Howard Muise asked if there was direct access at the property to the Bikeway. Dan Amstutz and Len Diggins responded that the parcel is not directly adjacent to the Bikeway.

7. Update: Mass Ave at Appleton St.

The Town Manager has formed a Design Review Committee. The first meeting will be held on March 23 at 7 pm, and meeting information is on the Town website. The Design Review Committee has received concepts from Green International (the consultant hired by the Town), Phil Goff (EALS), Petru Sofio, and Neighborways Design.

8. Chestnut St. Traffic Calming

Dan Amstutz updated TAC that the Town will be conducting outreach to neighbors of Chestnut Street. Planning is underway for a community listening session to discuss ideas and concepts on reconfiguring Chestnut Street. At present, there is no set date for a public meeting.

Jo Anne Preston inquired as to how the public meeting will be organized. She noted that there are ~140 residents at Chestnut Manor, who she would like included in the process. Many residents do not have a computer and are otherwise cut-off from Arlington Center.

Howard Muise agreed that it is important to have them included and hear their feedback. Paul Schlichtman said there is a sense of urgency to move forward with short-term and long-term plans. He added that Representative Sean Garballey has expressed his support and is offering to help with the Commonwealth.

9. Discussion: Sustainable Transportation Plan

Dan Amstutz presented the Connect Arlington Sustainable Transportation Plan. This is intended to be a 20-year plan with a focus on safety and mobility that reduces climate impacts and supports the local economy. Vision calls for a pedestrian first, walk-friendly environment with a low-stress bicycle network, and transit rich environment. He highlighted certain points under the sections of the presentation:

Safe Facilities Strategies: adopt Vision Zero policy, which changes the Town's approach to design; update the Town's Complete Streets prioritization; revise and implement Mass Ave Phase II (revisit the design, potentially to reduce the roadway from four lanes to three lanes, particularly by Town Hall). Add space for alternate transportation modes.

Pedestrian First Walk-Friendly Environment: improve sidewalk conditions (in progress).

Low-Stress Bicycle Environment: establish "Bike Boulevards"—low-traffic streets that provide safer bicycle travel parallel to high-traffic roadways—on roadways that connect to neighborhoods and schools.

He showed concept slides for (1) adding a separated bike lane on Broadway and (2) modifying the intersection at Broadway and Warren Street for safety.

Transit-Rich Environment. improve service in the Town by coordinating, cooperating, and advocating for its residents with MBTA.

Reduced Climate Impacts: Connect Arlington was made concurrently with the Town's Net-Zero Plan. A big part of the plan involves encouraging electric vehicles and increasing the number of charging stations.

Policies to Support the Local Economy and Resident Quality of Life: Curb management: curb side can be used for many different things. Consider alternative use of the space instead of parking, such as parklets, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), transportation network company (TNC) pickup/drop-off locations; loading zones.

Responsive and Transparent Transportation Decision-Making: Communicate transportation project updates. Develop and regularly update a Local Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP). This would inform the public as to how long a project would take, where it is in the queue, and its funding sources.

Using tactical infrastructure for rapid response and testing/evaluating possible neighborhood traffic calming options.

Tracking Progress and Success: Consider easy to measure metrics: number of crashes, mode share, travel time, bike-lane miles.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Dan Amstutz inquired of the TAC on the following: Priority on Strategies? Priority locations for safety and other improvements? Performance metrics for tracking progress.

Petru Sofio commented that he was happy to see Broadway protected bike lanes in the plan. He noted that Lexington tried a similar layout in 2019; flex posts or other barriers are needed to prevent automobiles from parking in the protected bike lanes.

Jacob Deck asked about tactical infrastructure and possible bureaucratic reforms to facilitate timely improvements. He added that a Red Line Extension through Arlington would address many parts of Connect Arlington.

Len Diggins supported Jacob Deck's suggestion about a Red Line Extension, adding that big ideas should be part of Connect Arlington. Regarding bureaucratic processes, he cautioned about changing them as they often serve important purposes such as informing the public.

Dan Amstutz responded that Connect Arlington requires the Town to change its processes (e.g., DPW and emergency services) for speed humps and traffic calming measures. He added that there are practical considerations on tactical measures that need to-be addressed. Regarding the Red Line Extension, the Town leadership would need to support the concept.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 pm.